



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 7, Number 1, February 2021

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD UPDATE

by Claudia Brownier

Since switching to remote work and virtual meetings, trainings, and events last year, we have all become more accustomed and comfortable with this new way of business and education. What first began with a lot of uncertainties, technical hiccups and difficulties, has now become a more familiar way of operating and conducting business. With the ongoing pandemic and concerns for the health and safety of our staff and program participants, the Governor's Council on Disability will continue to conduct meetings and programs in a virtual format for the foreseeable future.

An important consideration in providing virtual services and programs is the need for accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities to assure they can participate and enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else. In this issue, you will read about bridging the digital divide, the benefits of assistive technology, tips and tools for accessible online events, tips for legislative advocacy, the new format for the Legislative Education Project, and the Regional Leadership Forum.

We all look forward to returning to in-person events, meeting with people, and networking with colleagues to make new connections and form partnerships. Until then, we can all do our part to promote inclusion and accessibility for all.

GAINING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

by Caitlin Bartley, Department of Mental Health

When you have a disability, independence means everything. Even completing small tasks on your own is exhilarating! I have Congenital Muscular Dystrophy, a neuromuscular disease that impacts my mobility and ability to perform basic daily living activities. So, I am constantly looking for new (and fun) ways to be independent—and I love assistive technology!

I live in a completely accessible house that has everything set up just like I need it. Still, I have been looking into some technology upgrades that could help me control my living environment. For Christmas, my mom and stepdad hooked me up with some Wi-Fi-enabled wall switches and electrical plugs. Via my smartphone, these switches and plugs allow me to turn my lights and ceiling fan on and off and have control of the power to my heated mattress pad, aurora light, and disco ball. While flipping lights and appliances on and off may seem small, it's a big deal for me. Due to muscle weakness in my arms, I have always had to ask for help with these things. In addition, by having control of my mattress pad and ceiling fan, I can independently regulate my temperature at night, which has helped me to sleep much better. The independence these devices have given me means a lot—and it is so much fun to be able to turn things off and on by myself!



Photo: Caitlin Bartley, NCI Project Coordinator, Department of Mental Health
Referenced AT products: [Kasa Smart Plug-In Mini](#), [Wi-Fi Light Smart Switch](#)

VIRTUAL REGIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Rachel Rackers

The Governor's Council on Disability is accepting applications now until February 15th for the first virtual **Regional Leadership Forum**, held March 13 and 20, 2021!

Concerns about the ongoing pandemic and the health and wellbeing of our participants and staff have led us to the difficult decision to cancel our 2021 five-day Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, hosted annually by the Governor's Council on Disability and its partnering agencies. In addition, we have also canceled our four, one-day in person regional events that were scheduled for the spring.

As an alternative leadership training opportunity, the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is excited to offer a **FREE, virtual Regional Leadership Forum** for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21). Participants will have the opportunity to learn about leadership, career development, employment, goal setting, self-advocacy and independent living.

On two consecutive Saturdays, March 13 and March 20, 2021 participants will meet virtually with leaders in the disability community and hear from employers, mentors, alumni, and keynote speakers about the importance of goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership. The event is open transition age high school students. Must be a Missouri resident to qualify.

Apply now and get more information at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>.

For questions about the RLFs, please contact Rachel Rackers at Rachel.rackers@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

Please help us share this exciting opportunity with students, parents, teachers and colleagues!

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DURING THE PANDEMIC

by Laura Mueth



With the beginning of the 2021 legislative session in January and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, our office has been actively working to find answers to the uncertainty of doing legislative advocacy in a time when many people are unable to travel to the Capitol to attend hearings or meet with legislators in-person in Jefferson City or in their districts.

Some of the options that existed prior to the pandemic are still in place. Citizens can call a legislator's office or send an email to share thoughts of how particular bills will impact their lives as well as to voice support or opposition. Many legislators maintain a social media presence. Postal mail is another option though it is not the most effective choice when time is of the essence. The contact information for each legislator can be found on their individual pages on the [House](https://house.mo.gov) (house.mo.gov) and [Senate](https://senate.mo.gov) (senate.mo.gov) websites.

If you desire to still meet with your legislators, many are participating in virtual visits with constituents over ZOOM and other virtual meeting software. For organizations which typically invite legislators to tour their locations, you might consider hosting a virtual tour.

The House [hearing](#) page contains a weekly list of scheduled hearings as does the Senate [hearing](#) page for Senate hearings. The House and Senate have provided the opportunity to listen to hearings and the daily chamber activities online. At this time, the Senate is limited to audio and captions are not provided. The House provides video and audio. Captions are provided for the House Chamber activities. The House provides the Chamber debate via the Message board on the [home page](#). The [Senate Chamber Debate](#) is available off the home page.

** Due to the remaining uncertainties with COVID-19, the spring Regional Leadership Forum events will be virtual this year **

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM
VIRTUAL
REGIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUMS

WHAT: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TO LEARN SKILLS NEEDED FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, SELF-ADVOCACY, AND INDEPENDENT LIVING.

WHEN: MORNING SESSIONS ON SATURDAY, MARCH 13TH AND SATURDAY, MARCH 20TH.

WHERE: THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME! ALL YOU NEED IS A COMPUTER/SMARTPHONE AND INTERNET CONNECTION.

→ AND IT'S FREE! ←

APPLY ONLINE BY FEBRUARY 15TH!
573-751-2600
<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>

(Continued from page 2)

The House and Senate are continuing to welcome individuals to provide testimony at hearings. However, seating is limited in the hearing rooms due to social distancing. If you do provide in-person testimony, you will most likely be asked to remove your mask while giving it.

Individuals are being encouraged to provide written testimony to the committees in lieu of providing in-person testimony. The Senate has established a [system](https://www.senate.mo.gov/senatewitnesssystem/) (<https://www.senate.mo.gov/senatewitnesssystem/>) for electronic submission of written testimony. All submissions must not exceed five pages and must be received an hour prior to the beginning of a hearing. The House will be establishing a similar system on their website.

The recently adopted [rules](https://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills211/rules/rules.pdf) (<https://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills211/rules/rules.pdf>) for the 101st House of Representatives contain provisions allowing for remote testimony by phone or video conference at the discretion of each committee. The logistics of this method are currently being worked on. The House Appropriations Subcommittees have decided to allow remote testimony. More information will be available at a later time.

The Senate [Appropriations](#) committee will not be holding public hearings for Governor Parson's budget recommendations. Any comments may be submitted in writing to individual committee members.

Should you choose to travel to the Capitol, all visitors must use the south entrance and will undergo screenings in the form of questions and a physical screening. Advocacy days can be scheduled and held. Groups may reserve the first floor rotunda for events but are asked to wear masks and maintain social distance as much as possible. The third floor rotunda, alcoves, and House Hearing Room 2 are not accepting reservations for the entirety of the legislative session.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

by David Baker, Missouri Assistive Technology



As remote work, on-line schooling and similar modifications to daily life have occurred during the pandemic, considerable attention has been placed on the digital divide.

The term digital divide refers to the demographic and regional gaps between those who have access to modern information and communication technology and those who don't. In far too many cases, individuals with disabilities are on the wrong side of the divide.

One reason that individuals with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by the digital divide is lack of access to technology, assistive technology in particular. We live in a golden age of assistive technology in which numerous devices that "level the playing field" are available to individuals.

The mission of Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) is to help Missourians with disabilities and older Missourians increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services. The Telecommunication Access Program, iCanConnect Program and Show-Me Loans Program are but three examples of MoAT programs that are potential sources of devices to close the digital divide. For those new to assistive technology, MoAT staff are available to help you discover appropriate devices, uncover funding sources or provide training and other guidance on accessibility features. Additional information on programs and services visit [Missouri Assistive Technology's website](#).

The digital divide will not evaporate in the post-pandemic world as tele-medicine, on-line shopping, and similar strategies for adapting to the pandemic become commonplace. In response, it is important that people with disabilities and their advocates keep in mind that assistive technology is an important tool, while also advocating to see the digital divide eliminated through working to ensure internet access and accessible digital content.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Members

- Yvonne Wright, Chair, New Bloomfield
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Ronald Hack, St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- DeAnna Noriega, Columbia
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Jefferson City
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jessica Zimmer, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT Q&A

by Laura Mueth

After reading the legislative advocacy article on the previous pages, are you wondering how to find your way around the House and Senate websites?

*Navigating the House and Senate Websites** is one of the recorded modules offered as part of the [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP).



It provides information on the layout of each of the websites and how to utilize various features.

If you have questions after watching the module, you are invited to schedule a Q&A session with Laura. She can be contacted at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov

**Please note: All modules and videos were created prior to the pandemic and therefore do not reflect COVID-19 changes implemented by the House and Senate*

COVID TESTING AND VACCINATIONS

Get up to date information and resources about free community testing throughout Missouri and the latest info about vaccines:

COVID-19 Free Testing—<https://mako.exchange/splash/MOmakotesting>

COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/>

TIPS FOR ACCESSIBLE VIRTUAL EVENTS

by Claudia Browner

Accessibility should be a consideration any time we communicate information digitally, whether it is on websites, social media, documents such as PDFs and PowerPoint presentations, or in virtual meetings and events. Here are some important questions to consider:

- Does your meeting/event platform offer accessibility features?
- Prior to the event/meeting, do you ask what accommodations participants might need so you can prepare accordingly?
- Is the content accessible to all, or shared prior to the event?
- Is text captioning or sign language interpretation available?
- Is there good lighting when using a video camera?
- Do speakers/presenters identify themselves before speaking, and speak one at a time?
- Are participants muted when they are not presenting/speaking?
- Is there a chat or Q&A feature for participants as an alternative for speaking?
- Are you offering a recording of the event so participants can review information they may have missed?

For more information on hosting accessible meetings and events, please visit these helpful resource links:

⇒ Making Virtual Meetings Accessible to All

<https://www.idealst.org/en/careers/accessibility-virtual-meetings>

⇒ Hosting Accessible Online Meetings

<https://www.washington.edu/accessibility/online-meetings/>



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GCD NAMES ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS

by Claudia Brownier



The [Governor's Council on Disability](#) (GCD) has selected the award winners and honorable mention recipients of the 29th Annual [Inclusion Award](#) and the 8th Annual [Youth Leadership Award](#).

Photo: 2020 GCD Awards

The Inclusion Award and one Honorable Mention are presented annually to recognize private and public employers, individuals, and organizations that have successfully included people with disabilities in education, employment, housing, leisure activities, universal design and website accessibility.

The 2020 Inclusion Award winner is the St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station and the Honorable Mention goes to Job One, Independence.

For more information on the Inclusion Award winners, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclwin.htm>

The annual Youth Leadership Award and one Honorable Mention are presented to recognize an outstanding Missouri youth (age 16-26) with a disability that has demonstrated exemplary leadership by making a difference in their community.

The 2020 Youth Leadership Award winner is Luke Barber and the Honorable Mention goes to Olivia Apollo.

For more information on the Youth Leadership Award winners, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipaward.htm>

The awards will be presented to the winners at the quarterly meeting of the Governor's Council on Disability on April 30.

COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Get up to date information and resources about free community testing, vaccination eligibility and events, and transportation resources available for Missouri citizens:

COVID-19 Free Testing—<https://mako.exchange/splash/MOmakotesting>

COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/>

***NEW* COVID-19 Vaccine—Get a Ride**—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/ride/>

Additional disability related information is available on the **Disability Web Portal's COVID-19 Resources** page. <https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY UPDATES

by Claudia Browner



On March 23, Missouri disability organizations and advocates met for the annual Disability Rights Legislative Day (DLRD). Hundreds of individuals participated in the first ever virtual DLRD and discussed important disability issues and legislation with several Missouri legislators. Among the invited guests were Governor Parson, who issued a proclamation declaring March Development Disability Awareness Month, and Missouri State Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick who spoke about the [MO ABLE](#) accounts for Missourians with disabilities. Throughout the event, participants were able to connect with legislators via email message to raise awareness about DLRD.

The last day of the 2021 Legislative Session is May 14, 2021, which is only a few short weeks away. However, there is still time to meet with your legislators, either virtually or in-person at the capitol.

To assist in preparing for a visit with your legislators, the Governor's Council on Disability has put together a flyer titled [Tips for Meeting with Your Legislators](#), which can be found on our website, along with many other resources and educational videos about the legislative process in Missouri. If you have questions after viewing the information on our [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP) website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm>, you can schedule a [Virtual Q&A Session](#) with our office by contacting Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov. The Q&A sessions will be offered throughout the month of April.

As a reminder, if you are interested in attending a House or Senate hearing, the House [hearing](#) page contains a weekly list of scheduled hearings, as does the Senate [hearing](#) page. You can attend hearings, or provide testimony either in person or virtually.

Both chambers provide a system to submit testimony electronically. For information about Senate testimony, visit <https://www.senate.mo.gov/senatewitnesssystem/>; for House testimony, visit <https://house.mo.gov/WitnessForm/>

Lastly, if you are planning a visit to the state capitol and require accessibility accommodations, you can find helpful information on the House Accessibility Page (<https://house.mo.gov/Accessibility.aspx>) to prepare for your visit and request accommodations if needed. Additional information is available in the Capitol Access Guide, which can be found at <https://at.mo.gov/information-resources-publications/cap-access-booklet.html>

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MISSOURI RENTERS

by Claudia Browner

The Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) recently announced the [Missouri State Assistance For Housing Relief \(SAFHR\)](#) program to assist Missouri renters impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program provides rent and utility assistance for eligible Missouri residents. The money is paid directly to the landlord or utility company. To be eligible for the program, you must be a resident of the State of Missouri and at least one member of your household must be directly or indirectly financially impacted as a result of the pandemic, and you must be at risk of losing your housing or having your utilities shut off due to this financial hardship. Income limits apply.

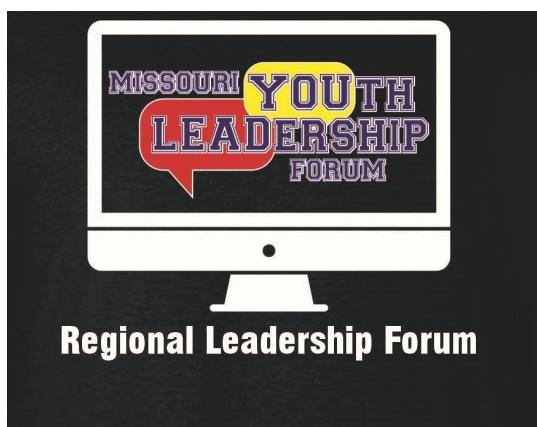


More information on program eligibility and the application can be found at mohousingresources.com/safhr

If you can not apply online or need help with your application, please call 833-541-1599 or email: mo.safhr@mhdc.com

VIRTUAL REGIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM A SUCCESS

by Rachel Rackers



The Governor's Council on Disability hosted its first virtual **Regional Leadership Forum** in 2021. On two consecutive Saturdays, March 13 and March 20, twenty-eight high school students who represented 17 different Missouri counties, met virtually with leaders in the disability community and heard from employers, mentors, alumni, and keynote speakers about the importance of goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership.

To kick off the event, participants heard from keynote speaker, Derrick Duncan about the importance of setting goals for yourself. They also learned a lot of valuable information about employment, interviewing and applying for jobs from a panel of different employers throughout the state. To wrap up the first day, SIL in Columbia lead a session about self-determination, self-advocacy and independent living.

Day 2 was full of great sessions, information and MO-YLF alumni.

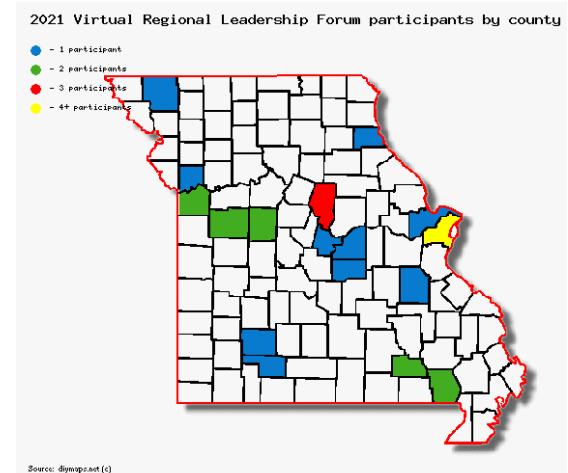
To start the day off, participants heard from keynote speaker and Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) alum, Madelyn Hubbs about the importance of self-advocacy in all aspects of life. During a small group session, youth had the opportunity to learn from the alumni about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum and how it impacted their lives. They also learned about the importance of mentors in school, college and at work. A panel of mentors provided great tips & tools for self-advocacy and leadership. Participants also heard from representatives from community colleges and Vocational Rehabilitation about college, accommodations, and disability services. MO-YLF alumni also joined in to share their experiences at college.

A special thank you goes to Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Services for Independent Living for their involvement in the planning and staffing of the event. Also, thank you to the many panelists and 12 MO-YLF alumni that participated in the very first Virtual Regional Leadership Forum.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 **Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)** has been canceled. Our planning team is saddened by the cancellation, but the well-being and safety of everyone is important to all of us. The planning team will soon start preparing for MO-YLF 2022. Be sure to watch for announcements and the application this fall.

In the meantime, stay tuned for additional upcoming youth leadership opportunities throughout the remainder of the year!

For more information on the **Missouri Youth Leadership Forum** program and events, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>



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TRAVEL WITH SERVICE ANIMALS

by Claudia Browner

As the numbers of positive COVID-19 cases are starting to decrease and Missouri residents are able to receive their vaccinations, people may start thinking about travelling again in the near future.

Whether you travel by car, bus, train, or airplane, here are some important facts to remember if you require a service animal to accompany you on your trip:



- * Places of public accommodation, such as public transportation (bus, train, public transit), hotels, and restaurants are required (by the Americans with Disabilities Act—ADA) to allow individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal without charging an extra fee for the dog. The same applies to places of entertainment such as amusement parks, museums, theatres, zoos, etc.
- * If you are planning to travel by airplane, airlines are required by the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) to allow persons with disabilities to travel with their service dogs. Please note that due to a recent change in the final rule about [Travel with Service Animals](#), airlines can require service dog owners to complete paperwork prior to their flights and airlines are no longer required to allow individuals with disabilities to travel with emotional support animals. If you travel out of the country, please keep in mind that the laws about travel with service animals may be different in the country of your destination.
- * To avoid unnecessary issues or surprises, it is always a good idea to plan ahead, do your research about your destination, and communicate any accommodation needs ahead of time.

To find out more information about the rights and responsibilities of service dog owners, and the laws that apply, visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/serviceanimals.htm> or contact our office at gcd@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

APRIL AWARENESS EVENTS

Autism Awareness Month—to celebrate differences and build an inclusive society. <https://www.autismacceptance.org/>

Distracted Driving Awareness Month—Information about the dangers of distracted driving and the injuries or fatalities it can cause.
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/distracted-driving/april-distracted-driving-awareness-month>

Limb Loss Awareness Month—Information and resources for live with limb loss or limb differences.
<https://www.amputee-coalition.org/events-programs/limb-loss-awareness-month/>

Parkinson's Awareness Month—Information about available resources to make life better for people living with Parkinson's disease.
<https://www.parkinson.org/parkinsons-awareness-month>



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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OPPORTUNITY FOR INCLUSION IN RECOVERY

by Claudia Browner

As more and more Missourians are vaccinated against COVID-19 and the number of cases is on the decline, the State of Missouri is returning to a new normal. Businesses around the state are reopening and many are looking for employees to fill vacancies. This provides a great opportunity for job seekers of all abilities to find employment, and for employers to embrace inclusive hiring practices to fill those vacancies. People with disabilities are an important part of the economy and are willing and able to contribute to America's recovery from the pandemic. There are many resources available for employers or organizations who have questions about the employment of people with disabilities and creating an inclusive workforce, including educational training on disability-related employment topics provided by the Governor's Council on Disability.

The U.S. Department of Labor has announced the theme for this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) as "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion." NDEAM is observed annually in October and celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities and educates employers and others about the importance of disability-inclusive employment policies and practices. Employers of all sizes and all industries are encouraged to participate. Read the [press release](#) or learn more about [NDEAM](#).

In preparation for NDEAM, and to raise awareness about the importance of including people with disabilities in the workforce, the Governor's Council on Disability is now accepting entries for the annual [Disability Employment Awareness Month Poster Contest](#).

Please submit your entries by August 15. More information can be found at <https://disability.mo.gov/PosterContest>



COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov>

Disability Web Portal—COVID-19 Resources page—<https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>

How MISSOURI'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITABLE COVID-19 VACCINE DISTRIBUTION IS INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Article by: *Sara Hart Weir, Special Advisor on COVID-19 (Disability Services) & Co-Chair of the Missouri Advisory Committee on Equitable COVID Vaccine Distribution*

The **Missouri Advisory Committee on Equitable COVID Vaccine Distribution** was formed in 2020 to work directly with and engage the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services' (DHSS) external partners and stakeholders, including the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD), to inform an equitable distribution of Missouri's COVID-19 vaccine supply. The Committee's mission is to solicit stakeholder feedback across the state of Missouri to ensure equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine across all communities with a focus on the disability, aging and underserved and underrepresented minority communities.

This Advisory Committee is working hard with community leaders to help Missouri strategize and deploy new resources to vaccinate those individuals who need them most, inform our State's process on the COVID-19 vaccine distribution and help expand COVID-19 vaccine awareness, education and promotion. As co-chair of this Committee, alongside Mr. Adam Crumbliss, Director, Division of Community & Public Health, our goal since day one has been to ensure Missouri's most vulnerable, people with disabilities and those who support them (i.e., their families, caregivers and disability service providers (DSPs)) were at the front of the line to receive the free vaccine throughout our vaccine roll-out process. Throughout the year, we have also been working to deploy new strategies and resources to meet the disability community where they are.

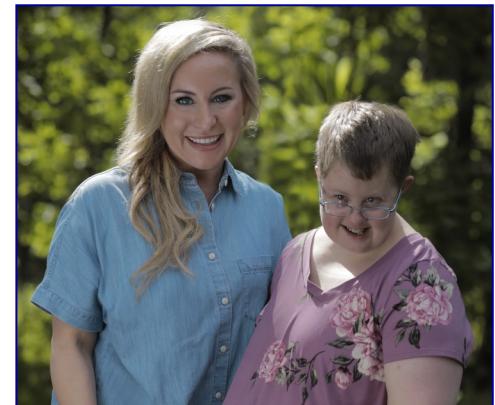
You can also access some of our new COVID-19 resources (and our website, MOStopsCovid.com, can provide translation in multiple different languages):

- ["Get a Ride": a list of statewide and regional resources for individuals who face transportation as a barrier to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Elijah Mayfield's PSA with Governor Parson](#)
- [Missouri's Seniors & Homebound Adults](#)
- [COVID-19 Accessible Resources by Accessibility](#)
- [Vaccine Considerations for People with Disabilities](#)
- [Caring for People with Disabilities COVID-19](#)
- [CDC YouTube American Sign Language \(ASL\) Video Series](#)

In early June, we will also launch the new "Missouri Plain Language Guide for People with Disabilities, their Families and Caregivers" on COVID-19 and the vaccine.

This work is also deeply personal for me. I spent 20 years working in the disability community where I started as a DSP in college, and ultimately became the CEO of the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS). A few weeks after joining the team at DHSS, I lost my best friend, Kasey, who happened to have Down syndrome, to COVID-19 before she had access to the vaccine in Kansas.

It's important that we continue to work together to win the fight against COVID-19 and protect our most vulnerable. I hope you will join us either by participating in our weekly meetings (which are open to the public, and take place each Thursday at 1 p.m. CST) or reach out to me with any questions at sara.weir@health.mo.gov.



Sara Weir and her friend Kasey

To learn more about our efforts and get involved, please visit: MOStopsCovid.com/equity.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION RESULTS

by Laura Mueth

The 2021 legislative session concluded on May 14. Even though it initially appeared not to be a big year for disability related legislation, when scrutinizing all the bills Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed by the General Assembly, it turned out not to be the case.

Several disability related bills ended up being part of [House Bill 432](#) which was the Birth Match Program bill and not followed by the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) during the session. The items in this bill include:

- School seclusion and restraint policies
- Parent/guardian recording of IEP meetings
- Sheltered workshop employee wage changes
- Alzheimer State Plan Task Force creation in the Department of Health and Senior Services
- MO HealthNet antipsychotic drug restriction prohibition
- Hospital psychiatric treatment for children in the custody of the State of Missouri
- Pediatric hearing aid insurance coverage requirement
- Mental health condition insurance coverage to meet the requirements of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act
- Step therapy override exception determinations modifications
- Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders established in the Department of Mental Health



Two bills not monitored by GCD, [SB 63](#), and [SB 72](#) included a provisions related to disability. SB 63 extends the MO Rx program in the final version, and SB 72 included a piece designating the month of April as "Limb Loss Awareness Month". The mental health insurance coverage requirement was also included in [HB 604](#). One Senate Bill ([SB 45](#)) regarding firefighters who contract cancer as a result of their employment was the only stand-alone disability related bill which was Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed. These bills have been delivered to Governor Parson and are awaiting his action to be signed into law.

CELEBRATING OUR 2021 GRADUATES

by Rachel Rackers

CONGRATS TO OUR ALUMNI WHO ARE 2021 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES!

YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

Camryn Dickinson	Seth Pumphrey
Katelynn Piepmeier	
Zamira McConnell	Taryn Stewart

VIRTUAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Ava Anderson	Ashley Fisher	Zachariah Palmier
Halle Cheek	Claire Helmig	Tara Reznak
Zachary Cox	Maynard John	Kendall Scharfen
Melina Derkum	Jonathan Morris	Tessa Schnizler
Scott Easterhoff	Michael Nilson	Austin Sobba

As the 2021 school year comes to a close, we take a look back at what this past year has meant to students, teachers and school officials. There's no doubt the pandemic took a toll on high school seniors, who missed out on so many irreplaceable moments like prom, homecoming, sports and college tours.

Five of our [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) alumni and fifteen of our Youth Leadership Summit alumni were seniors this year. We would like to congratulate them and recognize their accomplishments!

We present to you the 2021 High School graduates— Ava Anderson, Halle Cheek, Zachary Cox, Melina Derkum, Camryn Dickinson, Scott Easterhoff, Ashley Fisher, Claire Helmig, Maynard John, Zamira McConnell, Jonathan Morris, Michael Nilson, Zachariah Palmier, Seth Pumphrey, Katelynn Piepmeier, Tara Reznak, Kendall Scharfen, Tessa Schnizler, Austin Sobba, Taryn Stewart.

Congratulations and best wishes for your future!!

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

by Rachel Rackers

In July, the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) will celebrate its 20th anniversary! The Youth Leadership Forum was first developed by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons in 1992. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy set forth to replicate this initiative in all 50 states. Missouri held its first Youth Leadership Forum in 2001. Since inception of the program, a total of 344 alumni have graduated from the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, representing 70 of the 114 Missouri counties, plus the city of St. Louis. The next MO-YLF will be held in July 2022.



The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) held its first virtual Leadership Forum Summit on March 13 and 20, 2021. A total of 28 youth from 17 counties participated in the two-day program. After the successful virtual event, the GCD has the date for the 2nd annual virtual Leadership Forum Summit for February 26, 2022.

MO-YLF has grown tremendously during its first 20 years. It's exciting to add alumni to our YLF family every year, and to watch each of them blossom after graduating the program. Our past and future successes wouldn't be possible without the collaboration and support from our partners; Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

We hope that you will join us in celebrating the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum's 20th anniversary. Throughout the month of July, we will be highlighting each MO-YLF year in various ways. Be sure to visit our [GCD](#) and [MO-YLF Facebook page](#) frequently that month, to take a walk down memory lane!

In the meantime, stay tuned for additional upcoming youth leadership opportunities for 2022 throughout the remainder of the year. For more information on the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) program and events, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>.

MEET COUNCIL MEMBER WAYNE CRAWFORD

by Claudia Browner



On March 15, 2021, Governor Parson appointed Wayne Crawford to the Governor's Council on Disability. Wayne is the Executive Director of Missouri Inclusive Housing Development Corporation (MoHousing), a not-for-profit organization that assists citizens with disabilities, as well as the agencies and individuals who support them, in the search for affordable, quality, safe, and universally designed housing. A native to Marshall, Wayne worked for 33 years in the Division of Developmental Disabilities before becoming the Executive Director of MoHousing after retirement. He works on multiple issues that impact the housing needs of our citizens with disabilities and advocates for improvement in affordable housing throughout the state and nationally. MoHousing also assists developers and builders as they design and construct quality, universally designed, affordable homes. Wayne was the recipient of the Governor's Council on Disability's 23rd Annual Inclusion Award for his work to champion the need for quality, affordable, universally designed housing throughout Missouri. He is a member of the Missouri Access and Functional Needs Committee that provides rapid response to citizens with disabilities during a disaster and has worked with both FEMA and SEMA. Wayne serves on numerous boards and speaks nationally on the needs of citizens with disabilities.

Wayne states, "The appointment to the Governor's Council on Disability is a tremendous honor and carries great responsibility to listen, learn and support our citizens with disabilities." His goal is to represent the issues that impact housing in our state and be a voice for change. Wayne lives with his wife Marilyn and is the proud parent of two children, their spouses, and six grandchildren.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Members

- Ronald Hack, Interim Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D., Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Traci Ritter, Cape Girardeau
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jessica Zimmer, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

FCC BROADBAND BENEFIT AVAILABLE NOW

by Claudia Browner



Access to the Internet has become a necessity for many of us, especially during the pandemic, in order to work, attend school, shop for groceries, connect with family members, and much more. For families and households struggling to afford Internet service, there is help available through the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

The [Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#) is a temporary Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that provides support for broadband services and certain devices to eligible families and households through a discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband service, and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers.

Find out if you are eligible and [Apply Now](#) at www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or by calling 833-511-0311 to learn more about the benefit, including eligibility and enrollment information.

JUNE & JULY AWARENESS EVENTS

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month—to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease and take action. <http://alz.org/abam/overview.asp>

PTSD Awareness Month—to raise awareness about issues and the stigma associated with PTSD.

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/awareness/index.asp>

Americans with Disabilities Act—31st Anniversary (July 26, 2021)—Celebrate 31 years of progress in access and inclusion. #ADA31
<https://www.adaanniversary.org/>



Americans with Disabilities Act



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 7, Number 4, August 2021

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD UPDATE

by Claudia Browner

During the month of July, the GCD Team has been busy recognizing and celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (see article on page 2), and the 31st Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26. Our team has had the opportunity to learn the latest information about the ADA and disability issues at the National ADA Symposium, before gearing up for National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October.

LAST CALL FOR NDEAM POSTER CONTEST ENTRIES

The Governor's Council on Disability is still accepting artwork entries for the annual [National Disability Employment Awareness Month \(NDEAM\) Poster Contest](#) to raise awareness about the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

Don't miss the deadline—submit your entries by August 15 for your chance to have your artwork featured in this year's NDEAM poster, which will be distributed statewide and posted on our website, social media, in the October GCD Newsletter, in GCD's annual report and the month-long NDEAM Exhibit in October.

Detailed information about the contest and entry forms are available online at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest>



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL COMING SOON

by Laura Mueth

Each year, the Governor's Council on Disability conducts a Legislative Priorities Poll to find out, and inform legislators about the issues important to the disability community.

The 2021 Legislative Priorities Poll will be available for completion beginning on August 23 and closing on November 5 at 5:00 p.m. It will include a variety of questions. There will be opportunities for you to share with us in your own words issues you experience and changes you would like to see.

Keep your eye out for the Survey Monkey link to participate. It will be distributed via email and posted on GCD's [Facebook](#) page and [Poll](#) web page. PDF versions which can be completed and returned to our office will also be available through those avenues. If you have not received the Poll in the past and would like to receive it directly once it is ready, contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov.

MPACT—RESOURCES AND EDUCATION FOR PARENTS

by Brook Fuller, MPACT



MPACT is Missouri's one and only Parent Training and Information Center. We are funded in part by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—IDEA as well as a partnership with our state department of education (DESE). Here at MPACT we provide information, resources, and support through the special education process.

Our mission is to empower parents to be their child's best advocate. One way we do this is by offering free trainings both online and in-person such as our upcoming webinar series "Back to School IDEA Bootcamp". To view the calendar and register, visit our website at <https://www.missouriparentsact.org/upcoming-trainings-events/>

Currently, we are in the process of remodeling our entire website to make finding resources, our 100+ fact sheets, and our calendar of events more accessible, and to provide updated information. In addition to supporting parents, we also support our youth through events such as our upcoming Youth Transition Summit in Jefferson City on October 20th where we provide presentations and access to resources that will assist youth in their transition from high school to adult life.

All of our events can be found and registered for by going to our website at www.missouriparentsact.org. You may also contact us at (800) 743-7634 or by emailing info@missouriparentsact.org. Additional information and a video about MPACT can be found on our YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/sq2JOhb9no4>.

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM 20TH ANNIVERSARY

by Rachel Racker

In July, the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF), our 5-day leadership and career development training for students with disabilities, celebrated its 20th anniversary!

The Governor's Council on Disability is celebrating this important milestone with a series of videos looking back at each of the program years and culminating in a video montage of testimonials from MO-YLF alumni, staff, and supporters of the program.

If you have not had a chance to view the videos and hear about the impact the program has had on its participants, please check out our [MO-YLF Facebook page](#) at <https://www.facebook.com/MOLeadershipForum/>

For more information on the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) program and events, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>.



COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

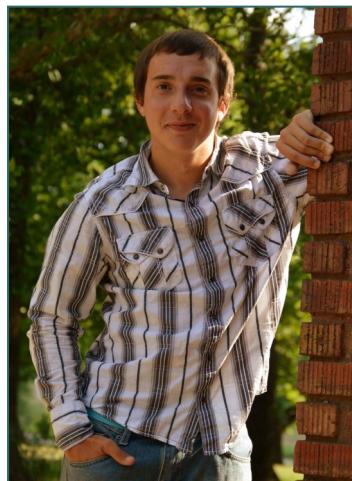
COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov>

COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/win/>

Disability Web Portal—COVID-19 Resources page—<https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>

MO-YLF ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT ON JOSHUA TUCKER—REACHING MILESTONES ONE STEP AT A TIME

by Rachel Rackers



Meet Joshua Tucker from Alma, Missouri. Life changed in an instant for Joshua when he suffered a traumatic brain injury from an ATV accident in 2012, at age 12. Against all odds, Joshua survived and has since overcome many obstacles with the help of his doctors, nurses, therapists, teachers, and most of all family and friends.

Each step towards independence was celebrated along the way as he relearned to eat, speak, and walk, returned to school, started driving, and graduated from high school in 2019. In 2017, he first attended the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum as a delegate and he returned as a staff team member in 2018 and 2019. Joshua has learned a lot about leadership, self-determination and independent living at the MO-YLF, and with his great personality, he quickly made many friends.

In February 2021, he accomplished one of the biggest milestones yet by moving into his own house! He's learned to cook for himself, clean, take his meds, and budget his money. And just this May, he graduated from Lex La-Ray Technical Center with a degree in Building Trades. Joshua is currently working for his family's business, Tucker Carpentry.

In his free time, Joshua loves to spend time outdoors and with his dog, Sunny. He also enjoys grilling, traveling, working on projects, attending sporting events and monster jams, and hanging out with friends and family.

We are very proud of Joshua's accomplishments and so grateful to call him our friend!



MEET COUNCIL MEMBER TRACI RITTER

by Claudia Browner



On March 15, 2021, Governor Parson appointed one of our newest members, Traci Ritter to the Governor's Council on Disability. Traci is excited to serve on the Governor's Council on Disability. She has been an advocate for people with disabilities since her daughter, Kaitlyn, was born in 1991. She and her daughter were instrumental in getting Kaitlyn's Law (Missouri HB236) passed in 2009.

Traci has served on several disability related boards locally, and was most recently appointed to the Cape Girardeau County SB40 Board.

Traci worked for Jackson R2 School District as a paraprofessional for the visually impaired for 6 years, and during that time, she started a parent partnership council to improve disability awareness in the local area. Traci regularly speaks at local university courses regarding parenting a child with a disability and advocacy.

Traci is a small business owner in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where she resides with her husband Kenny. She regularly supports entrepreneurs with disabilities by featuring their items for sale at the boutique she co-owns in Cape Girardeau. When Traci is not running her business and advocating for the rights of those with disabilities, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Members

- Ronald Hack, Interim Chair, St. Louis
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- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jessica Zimmer, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

ACCESSIBILITY IS COOL

by Claudia Browner

Do you want to learn about making your website and social media information accessible? Not sure where to start or need a refresher? Here are some resources to get you started.

Rooted in Rights, a project of Disability Rights Washington, has developed a series of short, easy to follow YouTube videos titled "[Accessibility is Cool](#)", covering four topics:

- Transcripts in a Snap
- Alt Text in 60 Seconds
- Audio Description in a Couple Minutes
- Captions in a Couple Minutes

For more in depth training on making web content and social media accessible, you can sign up for webinars hosted by [Missouri Assistive Technology](#), visit their Information Communication Technology (ICT) Accessibility page at <https://at.mo.gov/it-access/> or visit their [YouTube Channel](#) to watch training videos.

IN OTHER NEWS—TOKYO PARALYMPICS

by Claudia Browner

Are you a sports fan getting ready to watch the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics?

Originally scheduled for the summer of 2020, the games had to be postponed due to the pandemic, but are now scheduled to take place from July 23, 2021 to August 8 (Olympics) and August 24 to September 5, 2021 (Paralympics).

We are excited to report that one of our very own Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) alumni will be participating in the Paralympic Games this year. Colleen Young, a 2014 MO-YLF alum, has previously competed in the 2012 London Paralympics and 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympics, where she won a bronze medal in the 100m breaststroke. Later this month, she will be competing in her third Paralympics in Tokyo in the 50m freestyle, 100m backstroke, 100m breaststroke, and 200m individual medley. Good luck, Colleen. We are proud of you for representing Team USA!!

Watch Colleen's Team USA introduction video here: <https://youtu.be/IqdaAIHWoxA>

To find out when and where you can watch coverage of the Paralympic Games, please read information provided by NBC at

<https://olympics.nbcsports.com/2021/02/24/nbc-tokyo-paralympics-coverage/>





GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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RECOGNIZING NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

by Claudia Browner

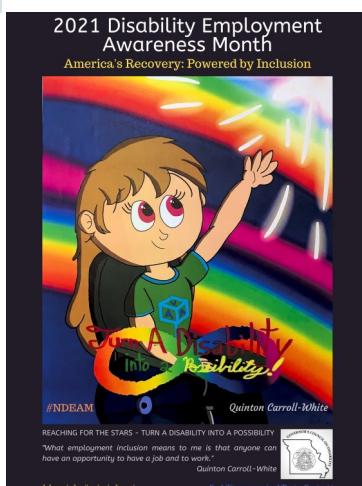
Each year in October, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month—NDEAM, along with the disability community and disability organizations and agencies nationwide. Initiated by the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment, NDEAM recognizes the contributions of America's workers with disabilities, brings awareness to employment issues, and reminds employers of the importance and value of an inclusive workforce.

The NDEAM theme for this year is "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion". To download the poster and find out more about NDEAM, visit <https://dol.gov/odep/topicis/ndeam>



The GCD recognizes and celebrates NDEAM by participating in NDEAM events throughout the month, providing presentations about employment inclusion, and hosting a [Virtual NDEAM Exhibit](#) on the Disability Web Portal. The exhibit provides information about the background and history of NDEAM, disability history, GCD's participation in NDEAM activities, ideas to celebrate, employment resources for Missourians with disabilities, and other resources.

Governor Michael L. Parson issued two proclamations, designating October as [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) and [Disability History Month](#) in Missouri. Both proclamations are posted in the NDEAM exhibit.



The GCD raises awareness about the importance of employment inclusion through its annual [Disability Employment Awareness Month poster contest](#).

The winner of this year's poster contest is Quinton Carroll-White, a young man from St. Louis who enjoys digital art and states, "What employment inclusion means to me is that anyone can have an opportunity to have a job and to work."

To find out more about the contest, or download a copy of the poster, please visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest/>

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL Now OPEN

by Laura Mueth



Each year the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) distributes a Legislative Priorities Poll to find out about issues important to Missourians with disabilities and those who work and live with them.

The 2021 Legislative Priorities Poll was released in August. We, GCD staff and council members, encourage every Missouri citizen impacted by disability to complete it. The deadline is 5:00 p.m. Friday, November 5, 2021. Each response received will be reviewed by staff and used to shape the Council's legislative priorities for the 2022 legislative session. The results will also be shared with state legislators and elected officials.

This poll can be completed online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NSGLGGB>. It is also available in PDF format which can be filled out electronically or printed and completed by hand. The PDF format can be accessed at http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative_priorities_poll.htm or by contacting Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov. Hard copies can be returned via fax (573-526-4109), email (gcd@oa.mo.gov), or mail (Governor's Council on Disability, 301 West High Street, Room 620 PO Box 1668, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1668). Assistance with completion is available by contacting the GCD office at 800-877-8249.

If you have already completed it, thank you and, please, be a part of the effort by spreading the word and encouraging others to take time to give opinions.

ANNOUNCING 2022 YOUTH LEADERSHIP EVENTS

by Rachel Rackers



The [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](#) and the Virtual Leadership Summit are statewide leadership training programs for high school students with disabilities, ages 16 – 21, hosted by the GCD and its partner agencies.

Our planning committee is already gearing up for 2022 MO-YLF, which will be held July 12th-16th at the University of Missouri Columbia campus.

Applications for staff, volunteers and delegates will be available by mid-October. The deadline for delegate applications is April 15th and staff applications are due May 1st. The MO-YLF planning committee encourages you to spread the word about MO-YLF and to come experience this life-changing week!

For more information about the MO-YLF and the online application, please visit <http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>

Dates set for 2nd Annual Virtual Leadership Summit—The Governor's Council on Disability will be hosting its 2nd Annual FREE [Virtual Leadership Summit](#) on February 26, 2022! Applications will be available at the beginning of October until January 14th.

Participants will meet virtually with leaders in the disability community and hear from employers, mentors, alumni, and keynote speakers about the importance of goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership. The event is open to transition age high school students. Must be a Missouri resident to qualify. Apply and get more information at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>

Please help us share this exciting opportunity with students, parents, teachers and colleagues!



MO-YLF ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT ON KYLE BORAH

by Rachel Rackers

This month's Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) alumni spotlight is on Kyle Borah. In July of 2011, Kyle attended the MO-YLF. He graduated from Oakville High School in 2012. After high school, he attended Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, to pursue a degree in Government with an emphasis in Prelaw. Although he enjoyed all of his classes, Kyle soon realized that he couldn't see himself doing law for the rest of his life. During his time at Evangel, he had friends who were into tech and programming, which started to change his view of technology. This sparked his interest in wanting to know how a computer worked and operated. After trying out programming in his spare time, Kyle was hooked and self-taught a type of programming called Python. He also discovered an interest in cybersecurity.

In the fall of 2015, Kyle enrolled at St. Louis Community College to finish his Associates Degree. He knew to become a software developer he would at least need a Computer Science degree. In January 2017, Kyle started at Webster University to pursue his computer science degree with an emphasis in cybersecurity and a minor in mathematics.

Webster University was one of Kyle's top two picks because he knew they previously had other blind students who attended. The Academic Resource Center (ARC) on Webster's campus contributed greatly to Kyle's success and ability to sustain his course load. They were able to help him with any accommodation that he needed, big or small. An example of this is when Kyle was taking Calculus, they couldn't just scan in all of the equations, formulas, and homework problems. Instead, they had to manually enter each one into a format that could be read with his reading device. In May of 2019, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science with an emphasis in cybersecurity and also a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics.

Kyle was hired April 2021 at the State of Missouri as an Associate Applications Developer on the Information Technology Services Division—Dept. of Higher Education and Workforce Development (ITSD-DHEWD) team. He stated, "The employment statistics for people who are blind are alarming! Not many blind people have a job and have a job they love and that is fulfilling to them. I thankfully do".

In his free time, he enjoys watching and cheering for St. Louis Cardinals baseball and Blues hockey. He also enjoys playing hockey and Beep baseball. In 2016, his brother Sean started the blind hockey team called St. Louis Blues Blind Hockey Club and Kyle has been a part of it since. Kyle joined the Gateway Archers in spring of 2021, which is a Beep baseball team in St. Louis. Earlier this year, their team participated in the 2021 National Beep Baseball Association (NBBA) World Series in Wichita, KS. Their team finished 9th out of 19 teams and Kyle received the Defensive Rookie of the Year Award. In addition to playing hockey and Beep baseball, he also plays piano, guitar and sings in the worship band at the church he attends.

COVID—19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov>

COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/win/>

Disability Web Portal—COVID-19 Resources page—<https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>



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LEARN ABOUT MISSOURI CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING—MOCIL

by Patrick (Pat) Chambers, President, Missouri Centers for Independent Living (MOCIL)



A state and/or federally recognized Center for Independent Living (CIL) provides programs and services to individuals with disabilities to assist them to continue to

live independently, and/or to achieve an independent living environment in their own home, and in the community of their choice. Missouri is fortunate to have a total of 22 Centers for Independent Living to support individuals with disabilities living within our state. Our 22 CIL's provide services in all 114 counties and the one independent city in the state. Many states have counties or geographic areas that are not served by a CIL. Each of Missouri's CIL's is an independent non-profit organization.

Missouri's first CIL was Paraquad, established in 1970, making it one of the first ten CIL's in the nation. In 1997, then-Governor Mel Carnahan, a strong advocate for disability services, was successful in getting funding approved for ten CIL's. The final CIL added to the list was Heartland Independent Living Center. It started as a branch office for an existing Center in 2002 before obtaining state funding as a stand-alone Center in 2006.

Every CIL nationwide must provide the five core services of Independent Living. Those services are Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills Training, Information and Referral, and Transition. Transition is actually a three-part service that provides for transition from nursing homes/institutions back into the community, advocacy for individuals at risk of being forced into that type of living situation, and also transition of youth into post-secondary education, or employment. In addition to the core services, each CIL, with direction from their respective board of directors, creates and implements additional support services that are needed by people with disabilities living within their service area. While it may vary from CIL to CIL, the overwhelming majority of programs and services are offered at no cost to the participant.

Since 1984, Missouri has had various associations of CIL's. These associations provide support and resources to their members which can then be used to support the participants the CIL serves. Our current association is MOCIL, Missouri Centers for Independent Living. Originally formed in 1998, and reorganized in 2017, MOCIL's membership now includes 21 of the 22 CIL's in the state. It is the largest number of members that the association has ever enjoyed. Having the vast majority of CIL's gives the association a very strong, unified voice when advocating with the legislators and state agencies. MOCIL meets on a monthly basis and conducts an annual business meeting and banquet in the fall of each year.



MOCIL recently launched its new website! If you would like more information about MOCIL or to find the CIL that serves your area in Missouri, please visit the **MOCIL website** at <https://mocil.org/>



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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SEASONS GREETINGS

by Claudia Browner



The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) wishes you a Merry Christmas, joyful holidays, and a healthy and happy new year.

Reflecting on the year 2021, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD), like many others, continued to face challenges due to the ongoing pandemic. We had to rethink how to deliver our programs and find new ways to serve our customers. For the first time ever, we held a virtual leadership program for high school students with disabilities, which had such a positive response that we will continue the program in 2022. We also provided the Legislative Education Project in a virtual format, and will continue to do so during the upcoming legislative session. And last but not least, in November, we hosted a new leadership program for high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing for the first time. I invite you to read more about all of these programs inside this newsletter.

As we approach the new year 2022, we look forward to continuing and growing our programs, whether they are in a virtual, hybrid, or in-person format, in collaboration with our partnering agencies.

RECOGNIZING LEADERS IN INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

by Claudia Browner

Looking back at the year 2021, who stood out to you as a leader in inclusion or youth leadership?

Awarding Missouri's leaders in inclusion and youth leadership recognizes and honors their accomplishments, and raises awareness about the importance of inclusion in all aspects of community living and advocacy on behalf of the disability community.

Please help the GCD recognize best practices in [Inclusion](#) and [Youth Leadership](#) by nominating deserving individuals, businesses, organizations, or agencies. It only takes a few minutes to complete and submit the online nomination form.

The GCD is accepting nominations now through January 31, 2022. To find out more about the awards and submit a nomination, visit:

Inclusion Award—<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclwin.htm>

Youth Leadership Award—

<https://disability.mo.gov/youthleadershipaward.htm>

Don't miss the deadline - nominate by January 31!

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

ANNUAL AWARDS PROGRAM

Recognizing Leaders in Inclusion and Youth Leadership

Questions? Call 573.751.2600

Inclusion Award
<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclwin.htm>

Youth Leadership Award
<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipaward.htm>

Please share this information with your colleagues and networks and encourage them to submit a nomination.

GEARING UP FOR THE 2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

by Laura Mueth

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) recently conducted its annual poll to determine the level of importance disability related issues have to Missourians impacted by disability through their personal and/or professional lives. Thank you to everyone who participated. The results have already been shared with members of our Council and via GCD's listservs and social media accounts. Legislators and members of the executive branch have also received the results to help them prepare for the upcoming legislative session. The report detailing all the results can be accessed at [2021 Legislative Priorities Poll Report](#).

The Council used the results from the Poll which included five hundred twenty-eight responses from individuals in sixty-three counties to determine our legislative priorities for the 2022 session. They are:

1. Plans for public emergencies and disasters ensuring needs of people with disabilities are met
2. All public buildings having evacuation plans for all people with disabilities
3. Accessible voting machine provided at each polling location to comply with federal law
4. Private insurance hearing aid coverage
5. The increasing cost of medications



These are the same priorities as in the 2021 legislative session though the percentages differ. GCD staff will track any bills filed by state legislators on these topics. The status of each one will be available in our weekly Legislative Updates. If these issues or any others in the full report are important to you, the GCD staff and Council members encourage you to contact your representative and senator to discuss them.

If you are unsure how to communicate with legislators or are unfamiliar with aspects of the state legislative process or advocacy, the GCD offers modules and videos on the [Legislative Education Project](#) (LEP) web page. These are available year round and viewing is encouraged throughout the year. Beginning in January and continuing through the conclusion of the legislative session in mid-May, a GCD staff member will again be offering virtual Q&A sessions for individuals or groups who have watched at least one video or module. The in-person options of LEP at the Capitol and LEP on the Road will not be offered due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. If you have questions or would like to schedule a Q&A, please contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov.

COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

FREE COVID-19 VACCINATION IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR ANYONE AGE 5 YEARS OR OLDER

FREE COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER NOW AVAILABLE FOR VACCINATED ADULTS AGE 18+

COVID-19 Free Testing Information—<https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/community-test.php>

COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov>

COVID-19 Information Hotline—Call 877-435-8411

Need Transportation to get the vaccine? Get a Ride Resources—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/ride/>

Disability Web Portal—COVID-19 Resources page—<https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR DEAF/HARD OF HEARING A SUCCESS

by Rachel Rackers



GCD staff and planning team members from our partnering agencies spent the last several months preparing for the first Leadership Development Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing high school students.

On November 1–4, Missouri School for the Deaf students participated four evenings in a leadership and career development training. They learned about the importance of self-advocacy, mentorship, career development and setting goals.

To kick off the program, students heard from keynote speaker Clark Corogenes about the importance of setting goals for their future. They also learned about important interpersonal and interview skills, followed by an opportunity to practice those skills.

On the second evening, students met with mentors to learn about overcoming barriers and reaching life and career goals. During a Q&A panel, they heard from entrepreneurs, VR counselors, and business owners about what employers are looking for in job applicants. The students also created vision boards for their own future goals.

During the third evening, students learned about college disability services, disability disclosure, self-advocacy, and asking for accommodations in college. They also heard from an individual from Journey 2 College, who gave lots of great tips and information on selecting the right college. Students also learned about tips for a successful job interview.



On the final evening, students learned about options for postsecondary education that are different from attending a traditional college or going straight into employment after high school (supported employment services, apprenticeships and tech school). To wrap up the event, students reviewed and tested their knowledge about what they learned throughout the week. They also had an opportunity to give feedback on what their highs and lows were for the program.

A special thank you goes to the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Missouri School for the Deaf, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services and Paraquad, for their involvement in the planning and staffing of the event.

The planning team will soon start discussing plans for next year's Leadership Development Program. With this being Leadership Development Program's (LDP) first year, it was only offered to MO School for the Deaf students. Be sure to watch for announcements about the 2022 LDP and also the possibility of expanding this wonderful program to other deaf and hard of hearing students from all of Missouri.

To find out more about the program, please visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/LDPDH.htm>

Photo: Student participants of the LDP are standing on stage inside the auditorium at Missouri School for Deaf

**Missouri Governor's
Council on Disability
Members**

- Ronald Hack, Interim Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Traci Ritter, Cape Girardeau
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

**Missouri Governor's
Council on Disability Staff
Members**

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jessica Zimmer, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

2022 MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

by Rachel Rackers



The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) planning committee is already gearing up for the 2022 MO-YLF, which will be held July 12th-16th at the University of Missouri Columbia campus.

The MO-YLF is a 5-day leadership training for high school students with disabilities.

Applications for staff, volunteers and delegates are available now on our website. The deadline for delegate and staff applications is April 15th.

The MO-YLF planning committee encourages you to spread the word about MO-YLF and to come experience this life-changing week!

For more information and the online application, please visit <http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>

APPLY NOW FOR VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The Governor's Council on Disability is accepting applications now until January 15th for the second [Virtual Leadership Summit](#), held February 26, 2022!

The Virtual Leadership Summit (VLS) is a one-day leadership training for high school students with disabilities, ages 16–21. It's hosted by the Governor's Council on Disability, Vocational Rehabilitation, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, and Paraquad.

A graphic showing a computer monitor displaying the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum logo. The logo is identical to the one at the top of the page, featuring "MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM" with "YOUTH" in a yellow speech bubble.

Participants will meet virtually with leaders in the disability community and hear from employers, mentors, alumni, and keynote speakers about the importance of goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership and independent living. It's also a chance for students to get a glimpse of our five-day program, the annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, which is held at the University of Missouri campus in Columbia.

Apply now and get more information at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>.

For questions about the VLS, please contact Rachel Rackers at Rachel.rackers@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

Please help us share both of these exciting leadership training opportunities with students, parents, teachers and colleagues!